

Proponent Testimony

DATE: June 21, 2021

TO: Members of the House State and Local Government Committee

FROM: Kirsten Hill

RE: Support for H.B. 327, Prohibit Teaching, Advocating, or Promoting Divisive Concepts

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

What children are being taught and are not being taught in schools in Ohio today are a concern of families, school board members and the community at large. This is certainly not a new phenomenon and the latest iteration of this age-old concern is captured by the term critical race theory which we have read and heard much about lately.

Some of the words that are associated with critical race theory are critical theory, critical legal studies, anti-racist, racial sensitivity, equity, culturally-responsive, cultural competency, cultural awareness, cultural appropriation, cultural racism, intersectionality, racial identity, racial equity, unconscious or implicit bias, diversity, inclusion, equity, white fragility, white privilege, whiteness, white supremacy culture, people of color, micro-aggression, and so on. It would be best to provide definitions of what each of these words means, how and in what context they are used in education but I will save that for another time if you are interested.

I will single out three of the terms; equity, culturally-responsive and anti-racist and provide examples of how these terms are currently embedded and connected to materials provided by the Ohio Department of Education and the Ohio Board of Education.

Equity

Equity means treating students differently depending on their membership in historically “privileged” or “oppressed” racial groups. Students from oppressed groups are to be given special treatment because of their race, with the ultimate goal of ensuring equal outcomes for all groups regardless of merit or effort.

The word equity appears many times in the resolution sponsored by Ohio Board of Education President Kohler and approved on July 14, 2020, by the Ohio Board of Education. The word also appears about one thousand five hundred and fifty times in a search on the Ohio Department of Education website.

Equity is not the same as equality. Equality means treating students the same regardless of race. Equality is now considered racist, because students from racial groups that are considered historically oppressed should be treated better than students from other groups.

“Equity is our strategic plan’s imperative and number one principle” is the second whereas clause in President Kohler’s resolution. I foresee that if students are treated differently in Ohio schools based on their membership in a historically “privileged” or “oppressed” racial group, we’re going to create problems, not solve problems.

Culturally-Responsive

Culturally-responsive teaching is a pedagogy that emphasizes including students' cultural references in all curricula. This is closely associated with action civics, essentially incorporating social activism into the classroom. There is a report by David Randall of the National Association of Scholars titled, "Making Citizens: How American Universities Teach Civics" which provides deep insight into turning education into activism training and recruiting.

To put equity and culturally-responsive teaching into practice, there is the Ohio Principal Evaluation System, also known as OPES 2.0. Number 6 on page 4 of the OPES 2.0 Model dated April 2021 lists equity and cultural responsiveness as one of the ten standards that principals in Ohio will be evaluated on.

Looking under the standard domain of "Culture" closely, it is written in the chart for the accomplished column on page 26, "The administrator proactively addresses individual and collective behaviors across the system that disregard and/or defy equity and cultural responsiveness." My interpretation of this is that accomplished principals, thus principals aiming to elevate their career path, will be taking negative action against a teacher who does not treat students differently depending on the students level of privilege or teach in a culturally-responsive manner.

Anti-Racist

Anti-racism in the current use of the term means a person must be proactive and can not be neutral on race. It is thought that it should become a way of life. The following quote from Ibram Kendi, a prominent leader in the anti-racist movement and author of [How to Be an Antiracist](#) should raise concern.

"In order to truly be anti-racist, you also have to truly be anti-capitalist...the origins of racism cannot be separated from the origins of capitalism. The origins of capitalism cannot be separated from the origins of racism." To get rid of capitalism, which appears to be Kendi's interest, would require eliminating private property rights. If we eliminate private property rights, we eliminate trade.

One of the items supporting anti-racism is the "Anti-Racism and Allyship Starter Pack" which is a long list of resources that teachers could access on the Ohio Department of Education website. The link was quietly removed by the department in the Fall of 2020 during the time of discussions between the Ohio Board of Education and State Superintendent DeMaria over the still-existent linking of the 1619 Project on the Department website.

We need unity, not the division created by the social justice movement under the umbrella of Critical Race Theory, to deliver quality education for students in Ohio schools. House Bill 327 works toward this end.

Thank you.